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Worthiness as Behaviour Component

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Abstract

Traditionally, respecting people's choice is considered equal with respecting people. Founded on the premise of choice, elaborated and hierarchically organized organizations have been built up to guarantee growth of living standard for securing quality of life. This article reports on a study which questions the adequacy of this premise. Three models of feasible societies have been used to study the way in which people prefer one or the other with respect to how uncertain or certain they are that their worthiness would be preserved. Subjects were 180 students of economy and business administration. The Swedish model, which in a previous study has proved to preserve quality of life the least, shows the highest assessment on worthiness in this study.

It has been observed (Sperry, 1983) that subjective values have objective consequences in the scientific work. This may be the reason why preference models are widely used. They are regarded as objective and value free in the data collection and the possibility in generalizing the analysis results. Subjective measurements, on the other hand, are regarded as value dependent and therefore not suitable for generalizing purposes. Because, subjectivity is supposed to be connected with such unique human experiences that are not generalizable. With this background, no one questions that scientific work requires a subject - object distinction without which the notion scientific would have no sense. Traditionally, human values are investigated with reference to the object component. The individual's choice or preference is seen as interchangeable with an expression of his worthiness. With this view, the study of the basic component of worthiness in humans would try to answer the question: What are the characteristics of a person that are worthy of our respect?

Method

Subjects

The participants of this study were mainly students of economy and business administration at Lund University, Sweden. The group of subjects contained 180 persons, 53 % male and 47 % female. Since no differences have been found between these groups, they were treated as one group.

Material

Within the Western wellfare states, different kinds of components have been built in which connect more or less to scientific models and theories. To study the concept of worthiness in alternative contexts, this study used three society models which have been constructed by the Biological Science Curriculum Study at Boulder in cooperation with King Screen Production in Seattle. The models have been described in Bierschenk (1987). Three different principles constitute the basis for the construction. They relate to behavioral, developmental, and cybernetic theory.

Instrument

A group of doctoral students taking a course in research methodology at Lund University was given the task to study a number of dictionary definitions of the concept of worthiness. The aim was to let the students group the attributes of these definitions. By the setting up of a matrix in which the attributes define the rows and the dictionaries (about 10) the columns, the following groups were established by means of Ward's (1963) clustering algorithm: Eigenvalue, Weightiness, Reliability, Incorruptability, Rank, Status, and Significance.

The next step was to construct 8-10 items for each one of these categories, which could serve for the estimation of value preferences of individuals. The measuring instrument came to consist of 49 items, each one having a 9-graded scale with the poles certain/uncertain. The instruction to the test form is worded:

Instruction. Now you have seen the slide series and have entered into this society. You will now assess a number of statements about how your life is. You will do that by indicating how certain or uncertain you think that every statement is. If you are "very uncertain", you indicate 1. If you are "very certain", you indicate 10. It is natural that the degree of certainty varies, so don't be afraid of using the whole scale. Work rapidly, but don't leave out anything.

Design and Procedure

The participants in the course got the assignment to test 40 persons concerning their preferences to the three society models. For this purpose, the group was divided into four pairs, which carried out the data collection according to the design presented in Table 1. One pair investigated 60 subjects.

Model 4 in Table 1 refers to the "Swedish model", functioning as the reference point. The Latin-square has been used, since one and the same subject was used several times in the study. The premise of this type of measurement is that it gives a mean value as an expression of the preferences the investigated group has in relation to these four contexts.

Table 1.
Balanced Latin-square

Pairs	**Stimulus Object** Model 1	 2	 3	 4
1	T_2	T_4	T_3	T_1
2	T_3	T_1	T_2	T_4
3	T_1	T_3	T_4	T_2
4	T_4	T_2	T_1	T_3

T = Treatment

Note. Both the rows and the columns are randomized.

Results

The factor analytic evaluation has been executed with SPSS and is presented in Table 2. As can be seen from Table 2, there are two clearly discernable factors. The first and most important one seems to be an Eigenvalue factor. It represents such items as refer more or less to

> A human being who has a conception of an "I" making him a person. The person expresses autonomy in relation to his societal context. The person cooperates as a responsable agent with this context, that is, he acts in correspondence with his own conviction.

The second factor expresses Rank. It represents items which refer to

> The relative position in a hierarchy in which a person is placed or may be associated with. Persons in the periphery of such a hierarchy, as a rule, lack the necessary intellectual and mental properties for being able to chose rational means to achieve their goals. By hierarchization, fundamental inequality is produced and preserved.

Table 2.

Two principle components accounting for 56.9 % of the trace of the correlation matrix from 49 items on 180 subjects

		Factor		Rotated		
Content*	No	1	2	I	II	com
I have the freedom to express my own opinions	36	83	01	83	04	69
I have the freedom to chose myself the literature I want to read	37	83	08	83	12	70
I can chose freely my political opinions	39	82	03	82	07	68
I can on my own form my life	20	80	-04	80	-01	65
I may have any religious conception I want to	30	80	03	80	06	64
I can together with my wife/husband decide upon when and how many children we want to get	33	78	02	78	06	60
I dare be myself	17	76	-13	77	-10	60
I can myself decide where I want to live	01	76	-04	76	-01	58
The society allows me to fight for my ideals	23	73	-08	73	-05	54
My power as an individual is tolerated	19	68	-07	68	-05	47
I can myself chose my clothing	32	66	03	66	07	44
I need not ask others when I shall carry out some action	41	66	01	66	05	44
I have the freedom to chose my childrens' education	31	63	02	63	05	40
I am never forced to to join meetings I don't care for	40	58	-00	58	02	34
I can influence the society's norms	21	54	-08	54	-06	30
I am treated differently if I have a formal title	26	01	73	04	72	53
My status is dependent on where my place is situated	07	06	70	03	70	50
My status in the society depends on my education	06	12	62	10	62	39
My reputation depends on which persons I am together with	08	01	60	-03	61	36
	λ	8.46	2.35			
	%	44.50	12.40			
	α_{max}	.94	.77			

* The English translation follows close to Swedish word order

The two factorized scales have been used as dependent variables in a discriminant analysis. The canonical discriminant functions of the analysis, carried out with SPSS, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.
Canonical discriminant functions

Function	λ	Variance	R_C	Λ	Function 1	2
1	.67	.71	.63	.47	1.00	-.08
2	.28	.29	.47	.78	.09	1.00

λ = Trace
R_C = Canonical correlation
Λ = Wilk's lambda

Two functions are extracted. The first function is the dominant one and accounts for 71 % of the variance. In addition, the rotated structure matrix shows their ortogonality, which facilitates the interpretation of the placement of the models in the discriminant space.

The next step in the analysis is based on the structure matrix, which is visualized in Figure 1. The Figure shows that the preferences are positive for the model that is anchored in developmental theory, while for the behaviour and cybernetic models the preferences are negative. The Swedish model is assessed more positively as regards worthiness than the other three models.

Discussion

The assumption of the existence of a basic transactive relation has in economic theory traditionally led to the principle assumption that every transaction may be assigned values (Goodin, 1981). By such an instrumentalization, people's values may be calculated, expressed through their choices or preferences. To the extent that calculated "worthiness" gives expression to rationality, it may be said that the choice of both the means and the

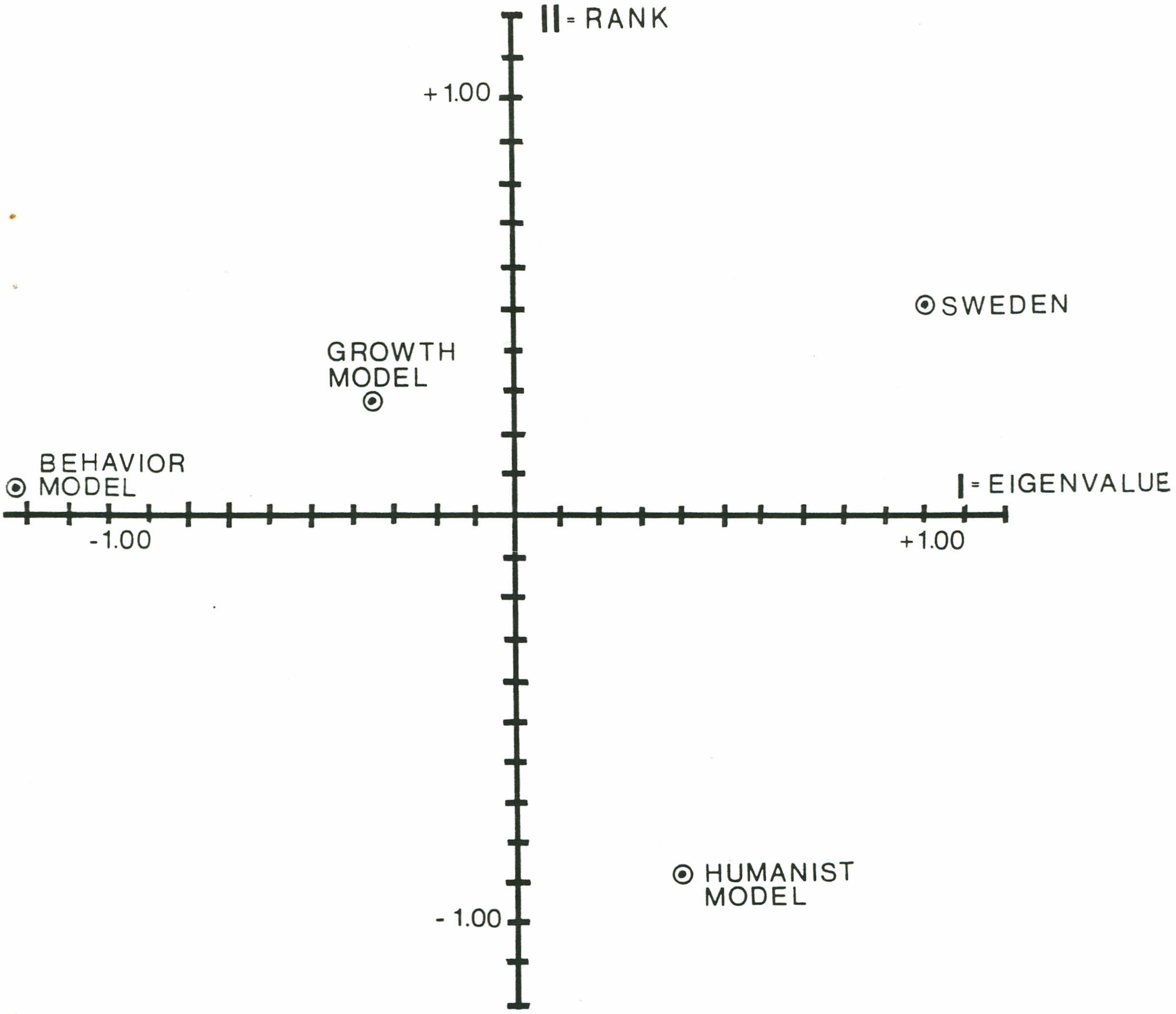

Figure 1. Discriminant functions (I, II) and their standardized coefficients.

goals has proved to be successful. This is the premise on which hierarchically ordered organizations are built up in order to rise the standard of living (Sjöberg, Vaughan & Williams, 1984). The emphasis of the wellfare state is put on an ever more efficient use of technical and human resources. The governing ideal seems to be economic growth (Bauer & Gergen, 1968; Gilad, Kaish & Loeb, 1986). By that is underlined the conception that both scientific and technological progress increase our living standard. But formal rationality has its price for the individual as well as for the society. Changes towards a high technology society entails costs as to ecological pollution and decreased living conditions (Proshansky, 1983). The hierarchization encapsulates the individual and requires sacrifices with respect to worthiness, which enforces the need for a comparison between the consequences of different developments concerning man's worthiness and quality of life.

In Bierschenk (1987), results have been presented, which sharply contrast with the preferences reported for the concept of worthiness. The societal contexts built on behaviour and cybernetic theory are assessed higher as regards quality of life than the society built on developmental theory. The Swedish model is assessed to be more indigent than the other three models and almost as poor as the developmentally based one. In Sweden, the social development during the last three decades has been governed towards something that has become known under the name of the Swedish model. It represents a society which institutionalizes all kinds of activities and decides for its members in all important questions. It prerequires a society that creates an environment with all the desired attributes, such as clean and well organized places to live, schools, hospitals, and large-scale administrations which can mobilize different kinds of specialists and financial or technical resources. The Swedish model, therefore, should come out as the model which creates a high quality of life. But obviously that is not the case. Because, if the assumption is correct that a well organized society is characterized by high quality of life, which the cybernetic model confirms, then it must be stated that the Swedish model has failed. So, it should not be surprising that the Swedish model is assessed more positively with respect to worthiness than are the other three. The conclusion must be that the individual's ability in choosing among two or more alternatives cannot be replaced by worthiness. This indicates that we ought to respect people and not rely on calculated preferences. Since worthiness precedes and helps to control changes in the human context, a profound study of human worthiness would lead us on a way towards autonomy and a new-orientation in the policy of rising the level of income and the number of human services.

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Authors' Notes

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